

"Is this the best table you have?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, it's the only one available in the smoking area."

"Let's go back to the bar & wait for another table," I said.

"Nooo!" she said. "I want to EAT!"

We took the table next to the restrooms.

"I wish you would give up SMOKING!" she said.

I told the waiter to bring a double vodka on the rocks & a bottle of red wine.

"I AM driving back!" she said.

THE POPE HAS SPOKEN

There's this still young poet,
who moved here to Bainbridge Island
a few years ago.

We would get together now & then
to drink some wine
& I got to know his work:
his stuff was good
& he was sending it out to magazines
but he wasn't finding many takers.

One day I met him
in the parking lot at the mall.

"How's it goin'?" I asked.

"Not so good," he said.

"I just got another batch of my poems
back in the mail."

"What kind of cover letters
have you been writing?" I asked.

"I don't write cover letters," he said.

"I let the poems stand or fall on their own."

"Don't be a dummy!" I said.

"You've gotta introduce yourself!"

"E. B. White didn't write cover letters," he said.

"Yeah," I said, "but E. B. White was married
to the right-hand gal of Harold Ross
over at The New Yorker!"

It was a November afternoon & getting cold.
The wind was whistling up my sleeves
& he still looked dubious.

"Listen to me!" I yelled. "The pope has spoken!
Start sending out letters with your fucking stuff!"

"All right," he said. "Okay!
I'll start using brief cover letters."

Since then he's been awarded several grants
& his poems have been getting into magazines
that are sending my stuff back,

so recently I made a decision
to start shortening
the length of my cover letters.

TURKISH DELIGHT

My wife leaps out of bed at 5 in the morning
to drive 6 miles to the community pool
for an 18-lap workout & a sauna
with

Dick & Marilyn, Don & Doris,
J.D. & Kathy, Tom & Sherry, John & Kim, Dan
& Maureen, Bob & Diane, Ken &
Nancy, George & Sylvia,
Richard & Shirley, Paul
& Liz, Art & Virginia,
Ted &
Tot,
Johnny & Kascha, Robert & Merri,
Bruce & Jean, Carter & Lynn,
Toby & Alicia,
Russell & Connie, Jay & Joan, Jerry &
Margot, Virgil & Lona, Tony & Babs, Kurt
& Sheila, Arnie & Carolyn,
Dave & Jody, Howie &
Jeanne, Tad & Joyce,
Emile &
Alice,
Ed & Anita, Doc & Florrie,
Mike & Pat....

I salute them all,
as I turn over & go back to sleep
with Sultan the cat.

— Richard M. West

Bainbridge Island WA